TRANSLATION AND RELEVANCE

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that the phenomenon commonly referred to as "translation" can be accounted for naturally within the relevance theory of communication developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986): there is no need for a distinct general theory of translation. Most kinds of translation can be analysed as varieties of interpretive use. I distinguish direct from indirect translation, where direct translation corresponds to the idea that translation should convey the same meaning as the original, and indirect translation involves looser degrees of faithfulness. I show that direct translation is merely a special case of interpretive use, whereas indirect translation is the general case. The varieties of translation, and translational faithfulness, can thus be accounted for without recourse to typological frameworks. I end by showing that direct translation requires the receptors to familiarise themselves with the context envisaged for the original text. The idea that the meaning of the original can be communicated to any receptor audience, no matter how different their background, is shown to be a misconception based on mistaken assumptions about communication.

1. Introduction

People have written about translation for almost two millennia, so that today there is a vast body of literature offering a wealth of observations and views on the subject. For the most part, writers have been pre-occupied with deciding which type of translation is the better, "literal" or "free". Unfortunately, this debate has remained inconclusive: different answers have been given at different periods and in different circles, and there has been no common frame of reference within which the different positions could be compared and evaluated. At the same time, the central questions of what translation is and how it works remained largely untouched, and so contemporary evaluations tend to agree that overall the study of translation has achieved comparatively little.[1]

About half-way through this century a change took place; scholars increasingly came to consider the debate about "literal" versus "free" translation as fruitless, and began to call for a well-founded scientific study of translation instead. At first linguistics seemed to offer the framework needed, but it soon became clear that it would not be adequate on its own. So today there is a strong call for a multidisciplinary investigation: linguists, psycholinguists, sociolinguists, semioticians, anthropologists, teachers and, of course, translators are all called upon to tackle the problem together.

The approach generally advocated for this multidisciplinary research is essentially an inductive-descriptive one: by examining the phenomena found in translation, one aims to discover regularities that can be stated

and will then form the science of translation. However, even at this early stage questions have arisen about the value of the likely outcome of this effort. Firstly, translations seem to be so varied and the number of factors on which they depend so large that it is not clear that more than statistical generalisations can be made. Secondly, given the variety of domains that need to be considered, what sort of a science is likely to evolve from this enterprise - will it be anything coherent at all? Thirdly, since the outcome of such inductive investigations will be crucially determined by its input, how can one avoid the risk of circularity? In other words, how can one avoid the danger that the concept of translation to be developed will be merely a reflection of what one took it to be in the first place - i.e. something dependent on the investigator's opinion?

In my dissertation (Gutt, in preparation), of which this paper is a summary, I propose an alternative, deductive approach that aims to avoid these problems.

2. The framework

Since one of my main objectives is to find out what there is to translation, I shall try to make as few a priori assumptions about it as possible; in particular, I shall not take for granted that there will be a theory or science of translation. The most important assumption that I do make is that translation is an instance of normal human communication.

This in itself is certainly not a new move; what *is* new is the theory of communication used. So far, virtually all attempts to treat translation as communication have relied on the "code model" view of communication, i.e. on the view that the essence of verbal communication lies in encoding, transmission and decoding. However, recently at least some translation theorists (e.g. Krings 1986, Wilss 1988) have questioned the adequacy of this model, and I shall adopt the relevance-theoretic account of communication proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) instead.

In the space given, I can only provide a brief sketch of the central ideas of relevance theory. The theory offers an empirical, cognition-based account of human communication.[2] It views communication as primarily an inferential process: the central task of the communicator is to produce a stimulus - verbal or otherwise - from which the audience can infer what set of thoughts or assumptions the communicator intended to convey. Since the range of inferences one can make from any phenomenon is huge and open-ended, there needs to be some constraint that helps the audience to identify those assumptions which the communicator intended to communicate. This constraint is provided by the principle of relevance, which amounts to the following, twofold presumption: the set of assumptions which the communicator intends to convey will be adequately relevant to the audience, and the stimulus produced is such that it avoids gratuitous processing effort on the audience's part. It is assumed that this presumption of optimal relevance is necessarily communicated by every instance of ostensive communication, and it entitles the audience to assume that the first interpretation of the stimulus found to be consistent with the principle of relevance is the one intended by the communicator.

The notion of relevance is defined as a cost-benefit relation: the cost is determined by the amount of processing effort required to interpret a

stimulus, and the pay-off is determined by the contextual effects achieved. Hence the less processing effort it requires and the more contextual effects it has, the more relevant a stimulus or utterance will be. Contextual effects result when information conveyed by the stimulus is inferentially combined with contextual assumptions, i.e. with information already available to the audience, perhaps from memory or perception.

It is important to note that not all contextual assumptions are equally accessible to the audience at all times; for example, as you read this paper, the information contained in the last sentence or so will be highly accessible to you, whereas information you read at the beginning of the paper might be much less so. You may be able to recall that information too, but it would require greater effort. This relationship between accessibility of contextual information and processing cost is important for the process of context selection: under the principle of relevance it induces the audience to work with the most highly accessible contextual assumptions that will yield adequate contextual effects.

As mentioned above, relevance theory applies to both verbal and non-verbal communication alike. Verbal stimuli differ from non-verbal ones in that they typically encode semantic representations in virtue of their linguistic properties. However, these semantic representations are usually incomplete - they provide schemas or "blueprints" for propositions which need to be inferentially enriched and developed in order to yield mental representations with a fully propositional form. This process includes such aspects as disambiguation, reference assignment, interpretation of semantically vague expressions like "soon" or "some" and so forth. Again, this process of developing the semantic representation of an utterance into a propositional form is controlled by the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance.[3]

Returning to our concern with translation, let us start from the hypothesis that all instances of human translation can be accounted for as instances of ostensive-inferential communication. As we consider different kinds of translation, we will be testing the validity of this assumption. Furthermore, if it turned out that all - or at least some subset of - translations involved the same sort of communication processes, then this could be used to define a sense in which translation forms a scientific domain or sub-domain of its own.

How, then, can we apply relevance theory to translation? Let us start from the definition of ostensive-inferential communication:

(1) "Ostensive-inferential communication: the communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions {I}." (Sperber and Wilson op. cit., p. 63) [4]

According to this definition, the essential "ingredients" of ostensive-inferential communication are

the communicator,
the stimulus,
the audience, and
the set of assumptions {I} intended to be communicated.

Turning to translation, it would seem that on minimal assumptions it involves the following eight "ingredients":

(2)

SOURCE LANGUAGE	RECEPTOR LANGUAGE
original communicator	translator
original text/utterance	translated text/utterance
original audience	receptor language audience
meaning of original	meaning of translated text

Given that translation involves two parallel sets of factors, the question is how the two relate to each other. Let us try to clarify the matter by answering the following four questions:

(3) In translation as an act of ostensive-inferential communication,

(a) who is the communicator?
(b) what is the stimulus like?
(c) who is the audience?
(d) what set of assumptions {I} is intended to be conveyed?

The easiest question to answer is (c): the audience for which the translation is prepared is obviously the receptor language audience.

The other three questions are not answered as easily, and will occupy us throughout this paper. We shall begin by looking at question (a) first: who is the communicator? Within our framework, there are two possible answers: the original communicator and the translator himself.

3. The source as communicator

The possibility of the original source being the communicator in the translation act is discussed in chapter 3 of my dissertation. In order to save sufficient time for the more complex issues, I shall present this matter very briefly.

We just agreed that in translation the audience is the receptor language audience; if we now assume that the communicator in the translation act is the original source, then we are talking about cases where a source language speaker is actually addressing the receptor language audience. This kind of translation abounds e.g. in international diplomatic circles and in the business world.

However, it seems doubtful that all of these cases need to be accounted for as translation; suppose, for example, that your company has produced photocopiers for export to an Eastern African country, and produces an operating manual in, say, Swahili. Now for the customers in Eastern Africa what counts is that the Swahili manual tells them clearly all they need to know for operating the photocopier. It is completely inconsequential to them whether there was an English original of this manual and whether the Swahili manual faithfully represents the information of that original. In fact, they may need to be given more or different information than the customers in England. The test of the quality of the manual will be how well it enables the customer to operate the copier.

Put in general terms, such instances are characterised by the fact that the receptor language text is presented not because it faithfully represents the contents of some source language original, but *in its own*

right; in such situations the existence of a source language text is incidental rather than necessary for the interlingual communication act to succeed.

These cases are clearly instances of ostensive-inferential communication: a communicator wants to modify the cognitive environment of a target audience; the only complication is that the source language communicator does not master the receptor language. Therefore he needs the help of a bilingual person to produce a receptor language stimulus that will communicate his informative intention. In other words, the process of stimulus production is shared between (at least) two individuals, but there is only *one* stimulus that is significant, and that is the receptor language one.

Seeing that such cases of interlingual communication do not necessarily involve a source language stimulus, one wonders how appropriate it is to refer to them as 'translation' at all.

The situation changes significantly when the receptor language stimulus is not presented in its own right, but as a representation of an original source language stimulus. In such instances the translator begins to figure as a communicator separate from the original source, and in terms of our guiding framework this means that we are now turning to the alternative answer to question (a), i.e. we are examining the role of the *translator as communicator* in the translation act.

This is, of course, where the real problems begin: we need to answer questions (b) and (d) - what is the stimulus like, and what is the set of assumptions {I} to be conveyed. These two questions are, of course, interrelated, and since normally the informative intention determines the stimulus, we shall look at question (d) first: what is the set of assumptions {I} to be conveyed in translation?

4. Conveying the original message

If one were to ask around what people think a translation should achieve, the most frequent answer would probably be that it should communicate the meaning of the original. This has not always been so, but since the middle of this century this view has been adopted increasingly by translation theorists. Accordingly, the quality of a translation is now often judged in terms of its comprehensibility and impact on the receptors.

This re-orientation has probably found its fullest development in circles concerned with the translation of the Bible, though it is not limited to this enterprise. The first and probably most influential approach along these lines is that of "dynamic equivalence" translation developed by Nida and Taber (Nida 1964; Nida and Taber 1969). These scholars state clearly that for them the meaning, or "message" of the original takes first priority:

"Translating must aim primarily at 'reproducing the message'. To do anything else is essentially false to one's task as a translator." (Nida and Taber 1969, p. 12)[5]

This commitment to reproducing the "message" of the original was taken up by others, e.g. in the "idiomatic approach" of Beekman and Callow (1974) which has been extended by Larson to cover the translation of non-biblical literature as well.

What do these approaches mean by the "meaning" or "message" of the original? There are no explicit definitions given, but it is clear from

what is said that the notions held are very comprehensive; they include both the "explicit" and "implicit" information content of the original, and extend to connotations and other emotional aspects of meaning as well.[6] For reasons of space, I shall concentrate here on the idea that a translation should convey the same information as the original.

According to relevance theory, the assumptions the communicator intends to communicate can be conveyed in two different ways: as *explicatures* or as *implicatures*. Explicatures are a subset of assumptions that are analytically implied by a text or utterance; more specifically, explicatures are those analytic implications which the communicator intended to communicate.[7] Implicatures are a subset of the contextual assumptions and contextual implications of an utterance or text - again that subset which the communicator intended to convey. Both explicatures and implicatures are identified by the audience on the basis of consistency with the principle of relevance.

With this framework in mind, the demand to preserve the information content of the original amounts to the demand that the explicatures and implicatures of the translation should be the same as the explicatures and implicatures of the original.

Straightforward as this demand may sound, there is a rather serious problem here, and this lies in the logical interdependence between explicatures, implicatures, and the potential context - or, more technically, the cognitive environment - in which a text or utterance is processed. This is, of course, one of the most basic characteristics of inferential communication. For example, the statement "There is a police car over there" could be used to communicate rather different ideas on different occasions: in a context where people are looking for help with a broken-down car it may be used to imply, "Let's go there and ask for help"; by contrast, in a context of someone driving a car with only one headlight working it might mean "Let's turn off this road quickly before they see us".

In both cases, the propositional form of the utterance and hence its analytic implications may be the same, indicating that there is a police car at a certain distance in the environment; the implicatures, however, can be very different indeed, depending on what contextual assumptions are accessible in the mutual cognitive environment of speaker and hearer.

One consequence of this is that whenever a given stimulus is interpreted in a potential context that *differs* in information content from the one envisaged by the original communicator, misunderstandings are likely to arise. Let us use the term *secondary communication situation* for such instances. Since most translation is done in secondary communication situations, it is not surprising that it has run into difficulties along these very lines.

For example, the Gospel of Mark reports an incident where four men lowered a paralyzed man through an opening in the roof in order to get him to Jesus; in one language it was found that a translation of this passage implied a miracle: "Since no indication was given of how four men, carrying a paralyzed friend, could get onto a roof (and the language helper tended, naturally enough, to think in terms of his own familiar steep thatched roof), the language helper assumed a miracle, ..." (Beekman and Callow op. cit., p. 47) Many such problems have been reported.

Unfortunately, the approaches advocating "same-meaning-translation" have failed to understand the inferential nature of this problem; mistaking it for a language problem rather than one of mismatch in contextual knowledge, they have proposed that the principle of keeping the meaning constant obliges the translator to express himself in such a way that misunderstandings will not arise. In practice this has meant one of two things: either the translator can "explicate" information needed to arrive at the correct interpretation of the text; thus in the example given it is suggested that he may have to add the information that the men climbed up stairs that led to the roof. I.e. he would express in the translation a contextual assumption of the original. Or he can, in certain cases at least, change the meaning expressed in the text. This latter practice is subject to some other constraints and is mostly suggested for the rendering of non-literal uses of speech, such as metaphors or irony.

Predictably, these solutions have succeeded only in part: it has not always been possible to prevent misinterpretation by either explication or semantic changes in the text - and there is no particular reason why this should be possible as a rule. In fact, the demand that a translation should convey the same interpretation as the original in secondary communication situations is at variance with one of the most basic requirements of successful communication; this is the requirement that to be communicable an interpretation has to be consistent with the principle of relevance. Since consistency with the principle of relevance is always context-dependent, what this means is that it is not necessarily possible to communicate a given set of assumptions to any audience, regardless of what their context might be. Communication is not just a matter of finding the right stimulus for what one wants to say - it crucially involves determining what one can communicate to a given audience, and that will depend on their background knowledge.

It appears, then, that the answer to question (d), "what set of assumptions {I} is intended to be conveyed?", cannot simply be "the assumptions intended by the original" because in secondary communication situations this demand conflicts with the requirement of consistency with the principle of relevance. Can relevance theory help us to find a better answer?

5. Translation as interpretive use

The obvious place to look for such an answer within relevance theory is interpretive use. As Sperber and Wilson (op. cit.) have shown, there are two fundamentally distinct ways in which representations like utterances can be used: they can be used descriptively, i.e. as true descriptions of some state of affairs, and they can be used interpretively, and this means they are used *in virtue of their resemblance with some other representation.*

Direct and indirect speech quotations, irony, and many other uses of language all rely on interpretive resemblance: the utterances in question are always presented in virtue of the fact that they interpretively resemble another representation, be it a text or thought. Since translations are also texts presented in virtue of their resemblance with an original, it seems they fall naturally under the category of interpretive use.

From a purely theoretical point of view, the ideal solution would be the null hypothesis - i.e. that translation is simply interpretive use, the

only difference from other instances of interpretive use following from the fact that the original and its report happen to be in two different languages.

To examine this possibility, let us take a brief look at the definition of interpretive resemblance:

(4) "... two propositional forms P and Q (and by extension, two thoughts or utterances with P and Q as their propositional forms) *interpretively resemble* one another in a context C to the extent that they share their analytic and contextual implications in the context C." (Wilson and Sperber 1988, p. 138; italics as in original)

One of the first points to note about interpretive resemblance is that it is not an absolute, but a *comparative* notion: i.e. utterances can interpretively resemble one another to varying degrees, and this will depend on the number of analytic and/or contextual implications they share. Thus interpretive resemblance covers the verbatim report of a conference session just as much as a ten-line summary of it in a newspaper.

From one point of view, this flexibility seems desirable - after all, in the course of time the term "translation" has been applied to virtually any kind of speech reporting across languages, including summaries.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the comparative nature of interpretive resemblance does not mean that there are no constraints at all on interpretive use. On the contrary, as an instance of ostensive-inferential communication, every particular case of interpretive use is constrained by the principle of relevance, which establishes a causal relation between the stimulus, the cognitive environment within which it is processed, and the interpretation it can be used to convey. In fact, the effect of the principle of relevance is that every utterance used interpretively automatically comes with a *presumption of faithfulness*: as an instance of interpretive use, such an utterance is presented in virtue of its interpretive resemblance with the original; by the principle of relevance it creates a presumption that its interpretation will be adequately relevant under optimal processing. Thus interpretive use provides a ready-made notion of faithfulness - it does not have to be defined especially for translation.

The single most important feature of this solution is perhaps that it allows explicit accounts of every instance of translation that claims to represent a source language original, but *without reference to any typological framework*, whether it be a typology of texts, functions, purposes, or audiences. The reason why freedom from typologies is so important is that one of the greatest problems in recent studies of translation has been that of developing typologies that will allow predictions for each instance of translation.

For example, realizing the large number of factors that need to be taken into consideration for any single text, Wilss reached the conclusion that "... TE [=translation equivalence] cannot possibly be integrated in a general translation theory (...), but must be looked upon as part of specific translation theories which are at best text-type-related or, even more restrictedly, single-text-oriented" (1982, p. 135) From a theoretical point of view, this seems to be a reductio ad absurdum: one of the main points of theory-construction is that it should allow us to explain complex

phenomena in terms of simpler ones, i.e. one of its main motivations is to make generalisations about phenomena. But if it turns out that each individual phenomenon, i.e. each text, may require its own theory, then this means that these phenomena cannot be accounted for in terms of generalisations, hence that they actually fall outside the scope of theory.

Wilss illustrates the need for single-text based accounts of translation equivalence with an example from Neubert (1968). This example concerns a passage from John Braine's novel "Room at the Top" where the colour of the sky is described as "the grey of Guiseley sandstone". Summarizing Neubert's discussion of this example, Wilss points out that the expression "Guiseley sandstone" could be translated into German either as "Guiseley-Sandstein" or simply as "Sandstein", and he claims that the decision as to which rendering is the right equivalent will depend on the interest of the receptors: "If this interest is exclusively focussed on literary aspects of the original, the translator can confine himself to the reproduction of 'Guiseley sandstone' by 'Sandstein', ... If, on the other hand, the translator must reckon with additional interests of the reader in area studies, he must react accordingly, because in a case like this only a translation containing an explicit reference to 'Guiseley sandstone' would meet TE [=translation equivalence] expectations ... " (Wilss 1982, p. 145)

While one can appreciate the problems a typological approach to translation equivalence would have in taking into account e.g. the interest in areas studies of the receptors, this does not cause any difficulties for our relevance-based account: such an interest would be naturally taken into account by the presumption of faithfulness, in that it constrains the translator to ensure that his translation resembles the original in relevant respects.

In fact, it seems that the various rules, principles, and guidelines that have been proposed for translations of different sorts are all applications of the principle of relevance. Consider e.g. the following overview given by Newmark:

"A technical translator has no right to create neologisms ... , whilst an advertiser or propaganda writer can use any linguistic resources he requires. Conventional metaphors and sayings ... should always be conventionally translated (...) but unusual metaphors and comparisons should be reduced to their sense if the text has a mainly informative function ... . The appropriate equivalents for keywords ... should be scrupulously repeated throughout a text in a philosophical text. ... In a non-literary text, there is a case for transcribing as well as translating any key-word of linguistic significance, e.g. Hitler's favourite political words in Maser's biography." (1988, p. 15)

It is not difficult to see that each of these rules is an application of the principle of relevance, spelling out what aspects of the original the translator should preserve for a particular audience in order that his translation adequately resemble the original in respects relevant to them. Hence a definition of translation simply as "interlingual interpretive use", makes clear predictions about what translation would be appropriate in any given situation, without reliance on typological props.[8]

Thus from a theoretical point of view this option is certainly possible, and for the practice of translation, too, it offers valuable help, since it allows the translator to consciously examine the pre-conditions for successful communication in any given situation.

However, the fact that it does cover such a wide range of texts may be seen as a disadvantage, in that it would not allow us to account for the common intuition that somehow a "translation" is something different than a "paraphrase" or an "abridgment". It is, of course, possible that this intuition will turn out to be elusive, but it seems worth examining.

The question, then, is: given that the idea of translation as "interlingual interpretive use" is too wide for this purpose - can we narrow down the notion of interpretive resemblance in a way that will make translation clearly distinct from freer forms of interlingual communication?

From a theoretical point of view, the problem is that interpretive use as such is too unspecific in the resemblance it demands with the original: the sharing of but *one* analytic or contextual implication would be sufficient for a receptor language text to interpretively resemble the original.

What one would *like* to demand is the sharing of *all* analytic and contextual implications but, as we saw above, this is not possible in secondary communication situations.

But what if one were to demand the sharing of *all and only the analytic implications* of the original? Could not translation be defined in terms of this more specific notion of interpretive resemblance? It would, for example, rule out all changes of the explicit content of the text - be it by elaboration or summarizing.

Something very close to this has, in fact, been proposed e.g. by Kade (1968) of the "Leipzig School" of translation. However, the problem is that such a definition does not capture all that one would need to take care of; one reason for this is that not all expressions of natural language have analytic implications: for example, proper names, greetings like *hello*, discourse connectives in the sense defined by Blakemore (1987), and onomatopoeia do not have analytic implications.

The same would be true of a number of stylistic features, such as foregrounding and backgrounding, the connotative "meaning" of words like "daddy" as compared to "father", or even the distinction between assertions and yes-no questions: none of these aspects would be covered by such a definition, and yet they would normally be considered important aspects of translation.

The problem is that these other aspects make themselves felt in the contextual implications of the translation - but as we have seen, to demand sameness of both analytic and contextual implications is to set up a theory with inherent conflicts in all secondary communication situations.

6. A stimulus-oriented approach

Returning again to our guiding scheme, our situation now is as follows: assuming that in translation the translator acts as communicator, we have been trying to answer question (d): what set of assumptions {I} is to be conveyed?; we saw that interpretive use provides an explicit account of translation in a very wide sense, but we did not find any suitable way of defining a narrower notion that would be clearly distinct from paraphrase, for example.

Now since stimulus and interpretation are interdependent - can we not perhaps arrive at a narrow notion of translation by trying to answer

question (b): what is the stimulus like in translation? Since the answer will have to take into account the original stimulus - can we define translation by specifying the relationship between the original and the receptor language stimulus?

When thinking about this relationship our first intuition will probably be that the receptor language stimulus should, in some sense, be the "same" as the original one. The most obvious case of "sameness" between verbal stimuli is that of direct quotation where one reproduces the original stimulus, i.e. produces another token of the original sentence, as Sperber and Wilson have pointed out (op. cit., p. 227f).

This raises some interesting questions. Given that one can report what someone else said in one's own words, i.e. as an indirect quotation of some sort - why should one want to repeat the actual words used rather than express the idea in one's own words?

Within ostensive-inferential communication the general answer is clear: one would want to do this precisely when it is relevant for the audience to know what stimulus was used originally, i.e. what exactly was said in verbal communication. But why could it be more relevant to know what was *said* rather than what was *meant*?

There are at least three possible reasons for such a preference. One reason is that an indirect speech report relies heavily on the reporter's interpretation of the original: the indirect speech report starts from what the reporter *thinks* the original intended to communicate. This introduces a potential source of error - the reporter may have misunderstood the original, and so his report could misrepresent the original.

Secondly, under the constraint of the principle of relevance, an indirect speech report will tend to focus on those aspects of the original interpretation which the reporter *believes to be relevant* to his audience. Again, he may be mistaken about this, and so here is another potential source of misrepresentation.

Thirdly, a stimulus can make manifest all sorts of information simply as a phenomenon with observable properties, i.e. quite apart from its use as a stimulus. For example, the way a speaker expresses himself can give evidence about his background, e.g. his education or age, of his emotional involvement, and perhaps even his character. By producing another token of the original stimulus, and hence preserving its various properties, a direct quotation gives the audience potential access to all this additional information.

In short, because direct quotations preserve the various properties of the original stimulus, they come with a guarantee of authenticity that does not rely on the reporter's own interpretation and his estimate of what is relevant to the audience, and furthermore they make accessible to the audience all information potentially derivable from the original stimulus.

Returning to translation, it is immediately clear that this notion of sameness will not do for a narrow definition of translation - precisely because the two stimuli will not be the same because they belong to two different languages.

Yet if what we said just now is right, then the importance of preserving the properties of the original does not lie in their intrinsic value, but in the influence they have on the interpretation of the stimulus, i.e. in the *clues* they provide for its interpretation. Let us refer to such clues as "*communicative clues*".

Now it seems that one of the most remarkable things about languages is that while they do differ in their concrete properties, they can resemble each other with regard to the communicative clues that they are able to provide; this is most obvious in semantics: thus English, German and Amharic, for example, resemble each other in the fact that they each have a word that can provide evidence that the speaker is thinking of a horse - i.e. the words *horse, Pferd* and *färäs* respectively. More importantly, this resemblance pertains not only to the lexicon, but to many other aspects as well. E.g. English and Amharic resemble each other in that both can provide clues about foregrounding - though one does it by stress and the other by clefting.

This opens up the possibility of defining translation in terms of the communicative clues shared between the original and the receptor language text; the most stringent condition possible would be that a translation must provide the same communicative clues as the original. In view of its relatedness to direct speech quotation, let us refer to this kind of translation as *direct translation.*

An important question is, of course, what sort of things the notion 'communicative clue' can cover. My dissertation surveys a number of aspects, ranging from semantic representation to matters of style, and from the clues provided by onomatopoeia to those of a poetic nature.

To take just one example, let us have a look at the opening paragraph of Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities.*

(5) "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before, we were all going to heaven, we were all going direct the other way ..."

About this passage Chukovsky comments: "There is an almost poetic cadence in this excerpt. The sound symmetry conveys its ironic tone extremely well." (1984, p. 144) By contrast, he feels that a translation into Russian along the following lines misses these effects:

(6) "It was the best and worst of times, it was the age of wisdom and foolishness, the epoch of belief and incredulity, the time of enlightenment and ignorance, the spring of hope and the winter of despair."[9]

Chukovsky feels that the problem is that "... [the translators] did not catch the author's intonations and thus robbed his words of the dynamism stemming from the rhythm." (op. cit., p. 144) Chukovsky apparently attributes the special effect achieved by the original to such structural properties as "sound symmetry" and "rhythm". While it seems unlikely that the "ironic tone" and the "dynamism" here are due to actual phonological characteristics, we can give an explicit account of these effects if we pay attention to the syntactic structures involved, the main difference here being that the translation combines into single, coordinated sentences what were independent pairs of sentences in the original.

One of the effects of using such a string of independent sentences is

that each can be interpreted as a separate statement, "echoing" perhaps the opinion of a particular group of people. In fact, such an echoic interpretation seems appropriate here for two reasons; firstly, it resolves the apparent contradictions between Dickens' statements; secondly, as Sperber and Wilson (op. cit.) have shown, the thrust of echoic utterances is not only to report what someone thought or said but typically to express an attitude towards it. Here both the exaggerated form of the statements and the fact that each is followed by its exact opposite suggest that Dickens' considered these evaluations ridiculous - hence the note of irony perceived by Chukovsky.

If this is correct, then we can understand why the translation cited does not get the irony across: the coordinated form gives the impression that each pair of evaluations constitutes a single, paradoxical statement and hence fails to provide an important clue to the intended ironical interpretation.

Overall, the survey seems to show that within the framework of relevance theory, the notion of direct translation, defined in terms of shared communicative clues, is helpful and allows explicit treatment of many of the more subtle problems of translation that have often been claimed to be beyond the scope of objective analysis.

7. Translation, faithfulness and successful communication

Thus it seems that we have arrived at two possible ways of defining translation: on the one hand there is the comparatively narrow, stimulus-oriented notion of direct translation; on the other there is the much wider interpretive-use notion, which we might want to refer to as *indirect translation*, by analogy with direct translation.

This state of affairs might be considered acceptable from a practical point of view, but from the theoretical point of view at least two important problems remain: firstly, the notion of "communicative clue", though useful, lacks an explicit definition, and secondly it remains unclear why there should be *two* such ways of defining translation, rather than three, four or twenty five.

To answer these questions, let us first have another brief look at direct and indirect speech quotations. This time we shall ask what the conditions are under which they can lead to successful communication.

Beginning with indirect quotation, as an instance of interpretive use, any indirect speech quotation creates a presumption of faithfulness; as Sperber and Wilson (op. cit.) have shown, the speech reporter creates a presumption that the interpretation he intends to convey resembles the interpretation of the original closely enough in relevant respects. This presumption of faithfulness is a derived notion. It follows from the nature of interpretive use on the one hand and the principle of relevance on the other; as an instance of interpretive use, an indirect quotation is used in virtue of its interpretive resemblance with the original; by the principle of relevance it creates a presumption that the interpretation offered will be adequately relevant under optimal processing.

Hence when a communicator engages in indirect quotation, he will tend to communicate those assumptions of the original interpretation that he believes to be adequately relevant, and he will express himself in such a way that the audience will be able to recover those assumptions in consistency with the principle of relevance. All the audience needs to do is to go ahead with processing: it can expect that by using the contextual

assumptions to hand, the first interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance will be the one intended by the speech reporter.[10]

With direct speech quotation matters seem rather different: the audience cannot simply use the most accessible contextual assumptions to arrive at an authentic interpretation; rather, in order to recover the intended interpretation of the original, it will have to use the contextual assumptions envisaged by the original communicator. This point is not only common sense, but also well-recognised in literary circles; one of the preconditions of authentic literary interpretation is a reconstruction of the historical, cultural and sociological background against which that piece of literature was created.

Correspondingly, one would expect this same principle to be applied to translated works, especially those that aim to follow the original very closely. Strangely, in translation circles the importance of this requirement has not really been understood. Translated works are regularly criticised for failing to convey contextual implications that really depend on the availability of the original context.

If the same requirements were made of direct quotations, then someone wanting to quote from Shakespeare should word the quotation in such a way that the audience could interpret it correctly, no matter how different their background might be from that of the original audience.

I want to suggest that this somewhat absurd situation has arisen from an inadequate understanding of the nature of language and communication; more specifically, these assumptions seem to be rooted in the code-model view of language and communication; on that view successful communication of the original message would depend on the proper use of the code (except for "noise" in the channel), and so, if the translation led to misunderstandings, the most likely cause would be a coding mistake on the translator's part.

However, even if the stimulus used is a coded one, in human communication it does not convey an interpretation except by inferential combination with a context. In ostensive communication, there is a causal interrelation between stimulus, context and interpretation, established by the principle of relevance, and I believe that the failure to see this interdependence has been one of the main reasons for the stagnation in the translation debate, if not its main cause.

In fact, a clear recognition of this causal relation opens the way to a coherent, explicit account of translation, and this account will integrate the notion of direct translation into the framework of interpretive use. The solution I want to propose is this:

(7) Direct translation: A receptor language stimulus is a direct translation if and only if it creates a presumption of complete interpretive resemblance with the source language original.

In order to see how this definition relates to our earlier notion of direct translation, let us take a closer look at what it entails.

First of all, it defines translation independently of the potential context of the receptors - in fact, it defines it with regard to the context envisaged by the original author. This follows from the logical interdependence of analytic and contextual assumptions which we discussed earlier on: two verbal stimuli can share all their analytic and

contextual implications only if processed in the same context. This means that the presumption of complete interpretive resemblance can be taken to hold only with regard to the original context, and we just saw that this is no extraordinary requirement, though at variance with a widely accepted view in the field of translation.

This first entailment has two very important effects. From the receptor audience's point of view it means that they can expect to derive an authentic interpretation of the translation only with regard to the original context; in other words, if they want to find out the original interpretation, the onus is on them to familiarise themselves with the cognitive environment of the original. In practical terms this means that generally direct translations need to be interpreted in a very different way from indirect translations, just as direct quotations may need to be interpreted differently from indirect quotations.

Correspondingly, from the translator's point of view it means that he need not adapt the translated text to avoid misunderstandings likely to arise from contextual differences, because he can work on the assumption that the translation will be interpreted with regard to the original context. In fact, he *should not* make such adaptations because if processed in the original context, such adaptations would lead to differences in interpretation. Thus, the presumption of complete interpretive resemblance rules out the explication of implicit information, summarizing and other changes in explicit content.

However, direct translation not only constrains the explicit content - it also determines the other properties of the translated text; again this follows from the causal interdependence of stimulus, context and interpretation: in order to achieve complete interpretive resemblance the translated text will have to convey not only the same analytic implications as the original but also its contextual implications, and in order to convey these contextual implications it will have to have all the properties needed to make these implications manifest.

And here we have the link-up with our earlier definition of direct translation: what we tried to capture intuitively with the notion of "communicative clue" is just this causal aspect of the stimulus, i.e. its potential to convey the intended interpretation of the original in the original cognitive environment. Thus we wanted the "communicative clues" to take care of all those properties of the original that affected its interpretation without, however, demanding identity in those properties, and we also wanted them to be independent of the receptor language context. Our definition of direct translation captures all of these characteristics, bringing out in addition a tacit assumption of our earlier account: i.e. that "communicative clues" are not just independent of the receptor context, but are, in fact, dependent on the original context.

As to the question why there should be just these two explicit notions of translation, the answer would seem to follow straightforwardly from the framework of relevance theory: as Sperber and Wilson (op. cit.) have pointed out, interpretive resemblance covers the full range from no resemblance at all to complete resemblance; however, while there is no principled cut off point at the lower end, the upper limit is clearly definable in principle: i.e. as complete resemblance. Hence it is not surprising that there should be two distinct notions of translation,

corresponding to the general notion of interpretive resemblance and its limiting case respectively.

It may be worth stressing here that direct translation is not simply the limiting case of indirect translation; rather, they are quite different modes of communication, requiring potentially very different ways of processing. We saw this already with regard to the contextual assumptions the audience is entitled to use: with indirect translation the audience is entitled to use the most accessible contextual assumptions that will yield an interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, but in direct translation the audience needs to ensure familiarity with the original context. However, there is another very important difference between direct and indirect translation, and perhaps this can be shown most clearly again by a comparison of direct and indirect quotation.

Suppose you were on the underground and had just missed an announcement about the trains. So you turn to another passenger and ask him what it was. The person might say, "The next train will be half an hour late."

Now it may happen that these were the exact words used in the announcement - but there would be no particular reason for you to expect that they were, and you would have no reason to interpret them as a direct quotation. It just so happened that a token of the original turned out to be the most relevant answer to your question. Thus, indirect quotations operate on *minimal* assumptions about resemblance.

Direct quotations, however, create a presumption of *maximal* resemblance, i.e. complete resemblance, and this makes them potentially very different with regard to the process of interpretation: it entitles the receptors to draw inferences from *all* the properties of the stimulus presented as a direct quotation. Thus if in our example the report had been given as a direct quotation, then I could e.g. find it significant that the announcement talked about "half an hour" rather than "thirty minutes", suggesting that the exact duration of the delay was somewhat uncertain.

In the same way, a receptor language text presented as an indirect translation would be processed on minimal assumptions about resemblance, i.e. on the assumption that the translation resembled the original in no more respects than was necessary for consistency with the principle of relevance. By contrast, a direct translation would be processed on maximal assumptions about resemblance in view of the presumption of complete interpretive resemblance. Again, an indirect translation may happen to be verbally identical to a direct one, but the two could well differ in the way they are approached and interpreted.

8. On the limits of direct translation

Now theoretically this may seem fine - but what about the "messy" reality of natural languages? Can we assume that direct translation is generally achievable, i.e. can be achieved for just any text or utterance between any pair of languages?

This question brings us to the issue of translatability - which in turn would lead on to the question of effability; we cannot go into this here because it would seem to require a dissertation of its own. Personally I believe that Sperber and Wilson (op. cit., pp. 191f) are right in arguing that effability in the strong sense does not exist, and I think there are

good reasons to assume that translatability does not generally exist either, at least not in the strong sense entailed by direct translation.

However, it would seem to me that little depends on the answer to these questions as far as our account is concerned, because our definition relies on a *presumption* - not a guarantee of success. As Sperber and Wilson (op. cit.) have pointed out, "the principle of relevance does not say that communicators necessarily produce optimally relevant stimuli" (p. 158) - in other words, it does not guarantee the success of an act of communication; however, it does lay down the conditions for successful communication.

By the same token, the presumption of complete resemblance in direct translation does not guarantee its success - but *lays down the conditions for its success*. Put in concrete terms, it specifies that a direct translation will be successful if and only if it conveys the interpretation of the original when interpreted with regard to the original context. To the degree that it does not, it will have fallen short of its presumption, and risk misinterpretation.

In this way, our definition of direct translation provides the frame of reference for its own evaluation, and at the same time it spells out clearly the risks involved in direct translation: the presumption of complete interpretive resemblance entitles the receptors to maximal assumptions about resemblance, hence they will be likely to draw inferences from all sorts of stylistic and other details of the translated text. At the same time, language differences may make it impossible to achieve complete interpretive resemblance - and hence our account predicts that in such instances some of the inferences of the receptors will be mistaken, and that without knowledge of the source language the receptors will not be able to spot such misinterpretation, unless the translator alerts the receptors to such problems.

This prediction seems to capture exactly what happens in practice: to the extent that linguistic differences between receptor language and source language make complete interpretive resemblance impossible, the interpretations of translations will always differ from the original interpretation, even if the receptors have taken greatest care to familiarise themselves with the historical, cultural, etc. context of the original, and hence the receptors generally need to remember that a translation is not an original, even in direct translation.[11]

It should be noted that within the framework of ostensive-inferential communication, the frame of reference extends also to the manner of expression, presuming that the stimulus used is the most economical one to get the intended interpretation, i.e. that of the original, across. This would account for certain intuitions about "unnaturalness" or "literalism"; for example, the use of unusual or even ungrammatical syntactic structures tends to make the receptor language stimulus more costly to process; if these complications were not outweighed by an increase in relevance with regard to the intended interpretation, they would make the stimulus less than optimally relevant.

Similarly, where the translator cannot preserve all the analytic and contextual implications but has to select, consistency with the principle of relevance would require that he give priority to a rendering that will achieve an optimum of relevance. Thus even in situations where full success is not possible due to language differences, our account makes predictions about the optimal translation. In such situations a better

understanding of the communication process may help the translator to determine in what situations an indirect translation may be preferable to a direct one.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, we see that relevance theory enables us to provide what translation theorists have been looking for - an explicit framework for accounting for the phenomena commonly subsumed under the term 'translation'. We saw that some of these instances need not be treated as translations, in that they do not necessarily involve a source language original which the translation is supposed to represent. The other instances are covered by relevance theory as two clearly distinct instantiations of interpretive use: one, referred to here as indirect translation, is simply interpretive use between stimuli from two languages; the other is the special case of interpretive use that creates a presumption of complete interpretive resemblance between stimuli from two languages. Placed in a historical perspective, these two notions could perhaps be seen as the spelling out of the century-old intuition that there is a dichotomy between "literal" and "free" translation.

10. Notes

[1] Cf. e.g. the evaluations given by Bassnett-McGuire 1980, p. 1; Schulte 1987, p.1, Steiner 1975, p. 238 , Wilss 1982, p. 11.

[2] More precisely, relevance theory is concerned with ostensive communication, where ostensive behaviour is defined as "behaviour which makes manifest an intention to make something manifest" (Sperber and Wilson 1986, p. 49)

[3] For a more detailed discussion of this process see chapter 4 of Sperber and Wilson, op. cit..

[4] The notion of manifestness is presented as follows: "An assumption, ..., is manifest in a cognitive environment if the environment provides sufficient evidence for its adoption, ..." (Sperber and Wilson 1986, p. 39)

[5] In fact, Nida and Taber demanded that equivalence should not be restricted to the information content alone, but also to the "dynamics" of the texts, and these dynamics were to be measured in terms of audience response. It is this notion that gave the approach its name - "dynamic equivalence translation".

[6] Nida and Taber gloss the term "message" as follows: "Message: the total meaning or content of a discourse; the concepts and feelings which the author intends the reader to understand and perceive." (op. cit., p. 205)

[7] Analytic implications are characterised by the fact that they have been derived by analytic inference rules only; an analytic inference rule is formally defined as a rule that "takes only a single assumption as input" (Sperber and Wilson op. cit., p. 104). The analytical implications of an utterance are determined by its propositional form. In practical terms, "the analytic implications of a set of assumptions are those that are necessary and sufficient for understanding it, for grasping its content." (Sperber and Wilson op. cit., p. 105)

[8] This is not to say that translation rules that make e.g. text-typological generalisations cannot be helpful, esp. for the training of translators. However, what must be clearly borne in mind is that such rules do

not have a value of their own but are valuable only in so far as they are valid applications of the principle of relevance. In other words, any such rule may need to be set aside if consistency with the principle of relevance for a particular audience requires this.

[9] Bobrov, S.P. and M.P. Bogoslovskaja, Povest' o dvukh gorodakh, Sobranie sochinenii, 1957-63; vol XXII, p. 6, as cited in Chukovskii (1984, p. 144)

[10] Note that in interpretive use the contextual assumptions available to the audience may well include assumptions about the original representation.

[11] It might seem more realistic to re-define direct translation as presuming maximal rather than complete interpretive resemblance; however, the notion of "maximal" interpretive resemblance is undefined, and such a redefinition would seem to obscure the very point just made: that misinterpretations are likely to arise in direct translation wherever linguistic differences make complete interpretive resemblance impossible.

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